

THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE WATER

**Environmental Racism
in Indigenous and
Black Communities**

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Bonner led. We were later joined by James Kerr, an instructor in Nova Scotia Community College's Environmental Engineering Technology Program. The mission of Rural Water Watch is to equip rural Nova Scotian communities with the knowledge, skills, literacy, and resources to address their concerns about drinking water quality. Its objectives are to build the capacity of homeowners in rural Nova Scotian communities to manage their drinking water resources by becoming knowledgeable about analytical testing, undertaking water sampling, and learning how to identify potential contaminants that could affect water quality; to help homeowners in rural Nova Scotian communities build a community-based drinking water monitoring network; to raise funds for water sampling and water quality testing and improvement; and to train students to address drinking water quality (Jiwa 2017).

In the of summer 2017, the ENRICH Project's team members and volunteers were also planning a two-part public and academic symposium that was held on October 26 and October 27, 2017, entitled *Over the Line: A Conversation on Race, Place and the Environment* — the first major event the ENRICH Project would host since 2015's *Connecting the Dots* event. Unlike that event, which focused solely on environmental racism in Nova Scotia from the perspectives of Nova Scotia-based community leaders and activists, *Over the Line* brought together community leaders, activists, professors, and environmental professionals based in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and the United States to discuss race, place, and the environment more broadly. Along with environmental racism, the event focused on how other socio-spatial processes and projects impact well-being and health in Indigenous and Black communities in North America, including renewable energy, climate change, the built environment, and urban planning.

The event was particularly thrilling for me because it featured presentations by scholars whose work I have long followed and who are cited in this book, including Robert Bullard, George Lipsitz, Cheryl Teelucksingh, Michael Mascarenhas, and Deborah McGregor. A few days after the event, I received an email from George Lipsitz expressing his interest in connecting the ENRICH Project with the work he and others have been undertaking at the Center for Black Studies Research at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Since I have been interested in creating more national and international exposure for the ENRICH Project, I accepted his invitation. I also relished the opportunity to work with George Lipsitz, whose work has been foundational to the issues and arguments made in this book and to the ENRICH Project over the years.

Chapter 2

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Indigenous and Black Conquest, Dispossession, and Genocide in Settler-Colonial Nations

The successful settler colonies “tame” a variety of wildernesses, end up establishing independent nations, effectively repress, co-opt, and extinguish indigenous alterities, and productively manage ethnic diversity. (Veracini 2011: 3)

Environmental racism is violence — one of several forms of state-sanctioned racial violence perpetrated upon the lands, bodies, and minds of Indigenous and Black communities through decision-making processes and policies that have their roots in a legacy of colonial violence in Canada and other white settler nations. Environmental racism is also constituent of settler colonialism. In this book, I understand the reality of settler colonialism through recent theoretical approaches to the various aspects of it (Veracini 2011; Wolfe 2006). The framework of settler-colonial studies calls attention to the ways in which environmental racism operates as a visible manifestation of white supremacy, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, possession and dispossession, and the erasure and genocide of Indigenous and Black peoples.

One of the many limitations of the environmental justice lens in Canada is its failure to fully grapple with how land value is deeply inscribed with ideologies about race in ways that illuminate how we value or don't value certain bodies, providing fertile ground for environmental racism and other place-based injustices to manifest and flourish over time. I agree with Deborah M. Robinson's assertion (2000 n.p.) that environmental racism is “old wine in a new bottle” — another manifestation of historical racial oppression that produces, reproduces, and sustains racial and other social inequalities by disproportionately affecting already-vulnerable communities in the present day. It is important to make explicit, however, that environmental racism harms Indigenous and Black communities in very specific and unique ways. For example, while both

experience racism, land sovereignty is also a key variable for Indigenous peoples and one that settler-colonial studies and struggles against settler colonialism have tended to foreground.

Lorenzo Veracini, one of the leading theorists on the topic of settler colonialism, differentiates between colonialism and settler colonialism in his article "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies" (2011), published in the founding issue of the journal *Settler Colonial Studies*. For Veracini, colonialism describes the late nineteenth-century European conquest and colonization of Africa and Asia, characterized by uneven structural power between areas of a nation state as well as unequal social relations, exploitation, and enslavement for the purposes of creating technological progress and improved infrastructure, among other factors. Settler colonialism, on the other hand, is conceptually distinct from other types of colonialism because it describes contemporary forms of colonialism in British-descended "settler colonies" such as Canada, the United States, and Australia, focusing specifically on the elimination of Indigenous peoples and their relationships from and with the land (Shoemaker 2015; Veracini 2011). Whereas in colonial states, the colonizers go out to the colonies and then return home in a circular movement, there is no return home in the case of settler colonialism. Rather, the goal becomes the transformation of the new colony into "home" — a process that lasts indefinitely.

While there are many different historical, political, theoretical, and practical definitions of colonialism, they all share one key feature: uneven power relations between individuals indigenous to the land and newcomers or "settlers." These relations of power are shaped by hierarchies of race, culture, gender, and class, and lead to the political, social, cultural, and material subordination of the less powerful group through domination and exploitation. Therefore, settler colonialism relies on the intersecting logics of white supremacy, capitalism, the reproduction of uneven power relations between and among settlers and Indigenous peoples (Veracini 2011).

European colonization began in 1492, when Christopher Columbus sailed west from Spain to the Americas, sparking large-scale exploration, colonization, and industrial development in the Caribbean, North America, and South America. In 1497, English explorer John Cabot landed on the North American coast, followed a year later by Columbus's third voyage, which reached the South American coast. France also colonized Eastern North America, several Caribbean islands, and small coastal parts of South America; Portugal colonized Brazil, the coasts of present-day Canada, and the northwest bank of the River

Plate, a river and large estuary between Argentina and Uruguay (Wolfe 1999).

Ugo Mattei and Laura Nader (2008) employ the concept of "plunder" to describe different historical processes of colonization and domination used by the Global North around the world. The goal was enrichment from plunder through exploitation of resources found in the colonized territories (extractable natural, human, and mineral resources) and the destruction of life. Mattei and Nader also distinguish between colonial practices of extraction and environmental colonialism. While the extraction of resources (raw material, natural history specimens, and ethnographic artifacts) imposed by colonialism is characterized by violent strategies where colonized peoples receive nothing in exchange, environmental colonialism is an ideological system of exploitation that operates with the consent and participation of the national elites. These elites are promised a reward (e.g., development, modernization, etc.) in exchange for implementing a system of management of natural and mineral resources that allows for the extraction, contamination and destruction of the environment. Thus, environmental colonialism involves both the exercise of biopower over the colonial territory and a sociopolitical and legal structure that allows for the exploitation of resources with the consent of the parties concerned.

Rob Nixon (2011) observes that neoliberalism upholds the legal-political structure of environmental colonialism because it interprets natural resources as "consumer products" included in the market economy. In fact, the new neoliberal geography suggests that natural resources have now become ecological commodities that reinforce environmental colonialism. These ecological commodities give rise to new strategies for control and domination, such as biopiracy, the mass purchase of agricultural lands, carbon emissions trading, and other contemporary enrichment practices (Atilés-Osoria 2014; Nixon 2011).

The colonialism practised by imperial powers focused on expansion and aggrandizement, motivated by imperial rivalries between France and Britain to amass territory in eighteenth-century North America. Postcolonial colonialism is primarily characterized by the inability of former colonies to distance themselves from the "colonial imprint," or in other words, the legacy of economic dependency and other entanglements that ensue from colonial relations and affinities (Shoemaker 2015). The enforcement of colonial institutions and laws upon Indigenous and Black peoples in Canada has been enabled, perpetuated, supported, and sustained by racist ideologies and practices that characterize Indigenous nations as uncivilized dependents. Colonial institutions refused to interpret nation-to-nation treaty relationships as agreements between

two independent powers; they did not view Crown promises in treaties with Indigenous peoples as legally enforceable obligations under international or domestic law (Coates 1999; Macklem 2001). These interpretations of the law, and the legal tools used to support these interpretations, have enabled Canada to continue to claim ownership of Indigenous lands and territories.

Legislation directed at Indigenous peoples was informed by the European belief that Indigenous peoples were racially and culturally inferior, and it was used to justify their exploitation and oppression. For example, the 1857 *Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in the Province* was premised on assimilationist ideology that provided for individuals of good character to have voluntary enfranchisement or be released from Indian status; they would no longer be considered "Indians" and would obtain the rights held by non-Indigenous settlers. This assimilationist policy attacked the integrity and land base of Indigenous communities and was used as a tool to move educated Indians away from the "backward" culture of the reserves. The *British North America Act* of 1867 represented a legal enactment of colonial domination, conferring on the colonial government unilateral powers to control Indians and lands reserved for Indians under section 91(24). This colonial piece of legislation provided a legal apparatus with which to advance and support the social and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples. The 1869 *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* interfered with tribal self-government in various ways, including privileging bureaucratic authority over traditional leaders and distinguishing between registered status Indians and non-registered, non-status Indians (Gosine and Teelucksingh 2008; Henry and Tator 2006).

Finally, the 1876 *Indian Act* sought to further assimilate Indigenous peoples by instituting elected rather than traditional Band Councils and making Indigenous peoples "wards" of the federal Department of Indian Affairs (Henry and Tator 2006). The Chief and Council system created by the *Indian Act* also stripped Indigenous women of their political powers, stipulating that only men could be elected as Chiefs and Councillors. These legislative decisions instigated and cemented inequalities between Indigenous women and men, thereby shaping the negative perception and treatment of Indigenous women. The government began to establish residential schools across Canada in the 1880s, in conjunction with other federal assimilation policies. In 1920, under the *Indian Act*, it became mandatory for Indigenous children to attend a residential school, making it illegal for them to attend any other educational institution. The removal of Indigenous children from their homes by authorities, as well as their placement in the care of strangers, was perceived as an effective

resocialization strategy that would culturally transform Indigenous children by creating a bridge from the Indigenous world to the non-Indigenous world and alienating them from their families, surroundings, and culture (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015).

Legislation directed at Black peoples in Canada from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century was primarily focused on slave ownership. The first shipload of African slaves arrived at Jamestown on August 20, 1610, and the first named enslaved African to reside in Canada was a six-year-old boy who was the property of Sir David Kirke in New France. The *Code Noir* of 1685 permitted slavery for economic purposes only. It was officially limited to the West Indies and was never proclaimed in New France. It was used in customary law, however. On May 1, 1689, King Louis XIV gave slavery limited approval in New France, giving permission to the colonists of New France to keep Black and Pawnee Indian slaves. In 1709, he formally authorized slavery in New France, permitting his Canadian subjects to own slaves "in full proprietorship" (Historica Canada n.d.a). June 19, 1793 saw the passing of the *Anti-Slave Trade Bill*, which was developed by John Graves Simcoe, the first lieutenant governor of Upper Canada. The bill was a gradual prohibition on slavery rather than a total ban, however. On August 28, 1833, the *Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies* abolished enslavement in most British colonies, including Canada, formally freeing nearly 800,000 slaves, although there were probably fewer than fifty slaves in British North America by that time (Historica Canada n.d.a).

Patrick Wolfe (1999), another leading theorist of settler colonialism, argues that, as a key feature of settler colonialism, white sovereign domination must be regarded as an ongoing encounter in which the main incentive is wealth and opportunities gained from the acquisition of land. Inherent to capitalism is the creation, consumption, and transformation of spaces and places; the assimilation, depopulation, removal, and erasure of Indigenous peoples; and the dispossession, expropriation, and territorial occupation of Indigenous resources, land, property, homes, and other physical structures — all toward the end goal of profit. Settler society operates on two levels: on the practical level, it seeks to eliminate Indigenous peoples to establish itself on their territory, and on the symbolic level, it needs to demonstrate its difference and independence from the mother country through the recuperation of indigeneity. As Wolfe (2006) and Glen Coulthard (2014) both argue, in settler-colonial societies economic, gendered, racial, and state power operate structurally and in tandem to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determination and turn

the land into property, laying the foundation for colonial state formation and capitalist development.

Heteropatriarchy is also a key feature of settler-colonial societies. Heteropatriarchy and racism operate as two interrelated, intersecting, and mutually supporting systems of domination that subordinate, marginalize and oppress women. In other words, not only do Black and Indigenous women experience both racism and sexism, they also experience patriarchy differently than white women, since racism is patriarchal, and patriarchy is racist. As Cindy Courville (1993: 33) observes, "The study of African women's exploitation and oppression requires an understanding of the transhistorical nature of patriarchy as an ideology and how patriarchy as an ideology shaped the construction and reproduction of African women's oppression." Kelly Macias (2015) notes that slavery and colonialism exposed African cultures to patriarchal values and norms, such as European father-led societies, male-centred control over women, the erosion of mother-centred values, and the marginalization and devaluation of women.

Tiffany King (2013) observes that the "othering" and "sexualization" of the Black female slave body ushered in sexual violence as a tool of settler colonialism. In settler-colonial nations, the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality shaped ideological representations of Indigenous and Black women as non-human and, therefore, legitimated and ensured their violation through genocide and rape. The sexualities of Black and white women became polarized during slavery based on a highly romanticized image of the ideal woman as a pure, passive, submissive, and dependent mother and housewife. These stereotypes placed Black and white women at opposite ends of a hierarchy, casting white women as fragile, modest, and sexually repressed and Black women as strong, resilient, and sexually immoral (Waldron 2002).

White women have played a significant role in the racial subordination of Black women. White feminists often obscure how they have long been implicated in the oppression of Black people at the same time that they have been oppressed by white men. Colonialism accorded the white woman a multiplicity of roles that allowed her to occupy a subordinate status in relationship to white men, as well as a dominant one in relation to Black people in her newly constituted role as an oppressor. In other words, white women occupied a position in which they were simultaneously privileged and oppressed. Anne McClintock (1995) argues that the shifting identities of white women accorded them an ambiguous status in which their dominance was masked by patriarchal systems of domination that placed them in a subordinate position to white men. White

women's role as oppressor has been constituted historically and contemporaneously since they benefitted from the exploitation of Blacks during and since slavery (Knowles and Mercer 1992; Waldron 2002).

Although white men were responsible for the creation of slavery, white women helped foster racial hostility, encouraging hierarchical relations between the colonizers and the colonized (hooks 1981; Stoler 1991; Waldron 2002). For example, many white women were involved in the ownership of Africans as chattel during slavery, as well as in the abuse of slaves in their homes. White women failed to dismantle the system of slavery, because it benefitted them (Olsen 1995). The subjugation of Black women encouraged white women's allegiance to patriarchy. This is a critical lesson about the relationship between racism and patriarchy: racism did not perfect patriarchy only by allowing slave masters the possibility of unrestrained control of Black women. It also secured the compliance of white women by promising them the privileges denied to slaves and threatening them with the punishments meted out to slaves.

Since the abolition of slavery, white women's role in oppressing Black women has evolved in less conspicuous ways. Despite their involvement in the abolition movement, the first white women's rights advocates in the 1830s had wished to maintain the racial caste system and seek social equality solely for white women (hooks 1981; Waldron 2002). Many of these women resisted alliances with Black women, fearing that it would undermine their status as morally pure ladies (hooks 1981). Sojourner Truth, a Black abolitionist and women's rights activist demonstrated the schism between white and Black women during this time. In the following quote, Miriam Schneir (1972: 94) documents how Truth identified the different relationships that each had with men and the white power structure:

That man over there say that women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man — when I could get it — and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman.

It would be misleading however, to suggest that white men and women have been the only oppressors of Black women. Despite Black men's status as a subordinate group victimized by racism, they have participated in the sexist oppression of Black women. Gender hierarchies among Black people were

firmly in place long before the institutionalization of slavery and were reinforced by the sexist politics of colonial America. Black men exercised their belief in their “natural” ability to lead by dominating leadership roles during the early Black liberation movement, consequently participating in the patriarchal system alongside white men (hooks 1981; Waldron 2002). They used the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s as a forum to denounce racism, as well as to announce their support of patriarchy. The concept of matriarchy was used as an ideological tool to confine Black women to rigid ideals of womanhood that were based on a traditional Western viewpoint. The Black men who joined Black Muslim groups in the 1960s and 1970s constructed a “feminine ideal” in which their wives were prescribed roles that were seen as naturally befitting women and that relegated them to a subordinate status (hooks 1981; Waldron 2002).

RACIAL CAPITALISM: ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM'S PROFIT MOTIVE

Canada was founded on enslavement and dispossession. Canada in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was characterized by assimilationist ideologies, practices, and policies; displacement, discrimination, subjugation, and oppression of Indigenous and Black peoples and cultures by Europeans; and the expropriation of Indigenous lands. In Canada, “the primitive accumulation of capital through the colonial theft of land is foundational to both current capitalist wealth and to state jurisdiction” (Solidarity Halifax 2017: 1). The potential for Europeans to access sources of new wealth prompted the expansion of European colonization in North and South America, as well as the creation of a global economy that was dominated by Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, and Britain. European settlers engaged in a number of activities to ensure their access to these newly settled lands, such as negotiating treaties, waging wars to extinguish Indigenous peoples, and eliminating and disrupting Indigenous landholding traditions (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). Therefore, colonialism is by its very nature capitalist because it dispossesses Indigenous peoples of their land and resources and subjugates their communities.

The concept of race as an ideology and discourse emerged at approximately the same time that colonization began, and when Indigenous and Black peoples were considered “racial others.” However, while colonialism employed the organizing grammar of race as a means to foster unequal relationships between Europeans and racial others, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Negrophobia, and other European xenophobic traditions are considerably older than the discourse

of race, which emerged in a significant way late in the eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, the discourse of scientific biological differences between groups of humans was in full effect and informed characterizations of racial others as heathen, uncivilized, and barbaric (Hier and Singh Bolaria 2007).

As Audrey Kobayashi argues (2000), the racialization process involves the application of stereotypical traits to racialized groups, leading to the social and spatial segregation of these groups; the hierarchical organization of society based on race, class, gender, and other social differences; and the creation of racialized spaces that are characterized by disproportionate rates of unemployment, income insecurity, poverty, policing, incarceration, and other racialized and gendered forms of state-sanctioned violence. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) observe, the state is inherently racial because it organizes space based on its interpretation of race, and instead of addressing conflicts emerging from racial hierarchies and inequalities, it is a driving force in sustaining those hierarchies and inequalities. The antithetical roles that Indigenous and Black peoples have played in the formation of settler-colonial societies reflect the unique ways they have been racialized and implicated in the landscape of white settler nations and in capitalist expansion. For example, while the reproduction of Black slaves expanded the wealth of owners, the increase of Indigenous populations was viewed as a threat because it hindered settlers' access to the land.

Racism drives and sustains capitalism, which is a racial, gendered, and patriarchal regime (Kelley 2017). Racial capitalism describes the commodification of racialized peoples for the purposes of acquiring social and economic value that benefits white people and white institutions through the surplus value and worth tied to racialized peoples' identities. Ultimately, racial capitalism harms racialized peoples through the reinforcement of social and economic inequalities that have the most disadvantageous impacts on racialized peoples whose economic well-being is determined by their market value. Capitalism is preserved through the ongoing salience and resilience of racism and substandard wages provided to racialized peoples, immigrants, and women (Leong 2013). It relies on the possession of Indigenous land, the perceived expendability of Indigenous peoples, and the perceived value of gendered and racialized labour (Goldstein 2017). Similarly, historical and contemporary forms of racialized dispossession have been shaped by chattel slavery and the legacy of inequality it left in its wake (Goldstein 2017).

Although environmental racism has not been sufficiently incorporated into anticapitalist traditions, environmental racism is “a distinct category of

capitalist strategy and an example of how capitalist exploitation exacerbates racial oppression" (Solidarity Halifax 2017: 1). The capitalist economic structure has led to the commercialization of industrial facilities and the waste disposal industry, which are considerably profitable. Therefore, it is a challenge to foster sustainable environmental practices in a capitalist economy based on consumption, especially when there is no sign that this consumption is slowing down. Capitalism can be defined as the profit that accumulates from an economic system in which the means of production is privately owned, and the distribution of goods is mainly driven by market competition. Capitalism's main tenets include private property, wage labour, voluntary exchange, competitive markets, mass consumption, and capital accumulation. Fundamental to capitalism is technological progress and sophistication, the replacement of "the old" with "the new," higher levels of productivity, and increased wealth (Robinson 2015).

Canadian capitalist expansion emerged out of a transformation from a primarily mercantile to an industrial form of capitalism that required lands to settle large incoming European populations. As state policy shifted at the turn of the nineteenth century, the objective of the colonial regime — as documented in the *Indian Act* — was settling treaties with Indigenous peoples, assimilating them, and extinguishing their land rights. Over the past few decades, globalization has restructured world capitalism to the degree that it has become distinct from earlier forms of capitalism. For example, all nations have been incorporated into a new global production and financial system as transnational capital has ascended. Whereas in the past a world economy linked countries and regions to each other through trade and financial flows, today nations are linked more organically in a global economy where the transnationalization of the production process, finance, and the circuits of capital accumulation are dominant features. (Robinson 2015).

Neoliberalism, which emerged in the 1970s, is a central component of racial capitalism and is itself a racial and class-based project that has increased race-based inequalities and normalized racism globally. Mardi Schmeichel (2011: 108) asserts that neoliberalism is a process of transformation whereby the administrative state that was previously responsible for the economy and human well-being became more concerned with treating people as "productive economic entrepreneurs of their own lives." The main objective of neoliberalism is to turn the "nation-state" into a "market-state" to facilitate global capital accumulation. Since environmental racism manifests within economic relations and exploitation inherent to capitalism, class systems, and the neoliberal agenda,

those communities that are the most marginalized, the poorest, and the most lacking in political clout will pay a disproportionate price for various forms of capitalist exploitation such as economic development, resource extraction, and industrialism. Furthermore, given that the impacts of resource extraction and industry on the health and well-being of communities are of minimal concern to a capitalist agenda, these communities will also bear the greatest environmental burdens and health risks. However, the communities most impacted by environmental harms also lack the power, information, resources, and global strategies to address and resist the actions of powerful multinational corporations and oppressive governments.

The neoliberal agenda is focused on economizing everything, from viewing human beings as market actors and every field of activity as a market to ensuring unrestricted accumulation of capital through fiscal and monetary discipline, flexible labour markets, liberalization of trade and capital flows, and the elimination of workers' rights. Its objective is to liberate private enterprise from government-imposed restrictions, regardless of negative impacts on citizens. The neoliberal agenda is much more concerned with individual responsibility and basic market logic that produces subjects who are self-interested entrepreneurs than it is with the public good and legal regulations that protect the welfare of citizens. Therefore, citizens — and not the state — are held responsible for addressing the lack of health care, education, and social security. Consequently, one of the main criticisms of neoliberalism is that it eliminates shared and equal access to public goods, fosters social and economic inequalities, and creates disposable populations (Martinez and Garcia n.d.; Shenk 2015).

Global capitalism had its origins in slavery and also impacted the lives of indentured servants, prisoners, or other coerced persons. Racism remains one of the most significant pillars of capitalism because racial ideologies are used to justify labour and employment hierarchies that distribute rewards unequally (Robinson 2015). The long history of assigning value to race in the Americas means that property is inherently inscribed with racial meaning: whiteness has historically legitimized possession of property, and non-whiteness was valued only to the extent that a non-white person could be possessed as property. Capitalism was founded on the acquisition of social and economic value through the degradation and commodification of an individual's racial identity (Leong 2013). Katherine McKittrick (2011) observes that capitalism is greatly enabled by the exploitation of Black geographies in the Americas where uneven development, underdevelopment, and poverty remain central features.

Furthermore, the relationship between gender, feminism, and neoliberalism highlights the interplay between patriarchy and neoliberalism, the gender blindness of neoclassical economics, and the negative impacts of neoliberal policies on women (Cornwall, Gideon and Wilson 2008; Elson 1992; Sparr 1995). The cultural strand of feminism was complementary to neoliberalism in the context of cultural changes that equated women's self-worth with work outside the home, leading to women's increased presence in the labour force and their greater financial independence. However, the perceived advancement of women obscured their economic exploitation in the labour force. Referred to as the "feminization of labour," neoliberal policies contributed to the deterioration of working conditions that impacted women in specific ways, including the violation of international labour standards and low wages (Smith 2008). Although neoliberalism values individual agency, it is rooted in liberal theory that has always excluded women from this notion of individuality in favour of ideologies that characterize women as protective mothers whose main concerns are personal and economic gain and making personal sacrifices for the betterment of the household. Neoliberalism re-embeds women within the domestic sphere, stripping them of their individuality (Smith 2008).

Neoliberalism's meritocratic view of women's advancement in the labour force obscures the fact that these achievements are experienced by a small group of women and, consequently, compromises the work being carried out by collective movements for equity. Neoliberalism is also less willing to critique the political and economic structures that produce inequalities between women and men and among women (Schmeichel 2011). Feminist interventions that have the potential to become radical grassroots efforts are often sidelined because the women who work in women-oriented non-governmental organizations are hired to provide basic human services. While the technical professionalization of these women as gender experts and service subcontractors means that they can compete effectively in the neoliberal social policy arena, they also experience barriers building relationships and solidarity with disadvantaged women (Hawkesworth 2006; Smith 2008).

The ongoing debate as to whether race or class is the main determinant of environmental injustice has been challenged by a body of environmental justice scholarship that argues racism should never be separated from class, capitalism, gender, or other social relations and is, instead, an intrinsic feature of state apparatus that works to structure other social differences (Cutter 1995; Kurtz 2009). For example, Laura Pulido (1996) contends that rather than extricating race from analyses of the capitalistic economic structure, environmental

justice scholarship should pay attention to the racialized nature of the economy and how this shapes environmental injustices. The notion that racism can be subsumed within or reduced to class fails to consider the ways in which racism operates discursively and materially to assign different values to individuals. Therefore, Pulido (2016) argues the importance of rethinking capitalism as racial capitalism.

Environmental racism, then, is a visible manifestation of racial capitalism because the pursuit and accumulation of power and profits for elites through the placement of harmful industries in isolated and poor Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities relies on ideological notions about the expendability and disposability of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized bodies residing in racially devalued places. Given that Indigenous and Black peoples residing in rural areas in Nova Scotia experience high rates of precarious employment, they are seen as having little value to capital, lacking in worth, value, and political clout, and therefore expendable and disposable. Consequently, it makes cultural common sense, as Mills (2001) argues, to place harmful industries in these communities. Racial capitalism remains the main obstacle to addressing environmental racism, since the main goal of industry owners is to benefit themselves by creating surplus value, producing and maximizing profit, allocating resources, and accumulating wealth in areas where the population is most marginalized and less able to fight back.

EPISTEMOLOGIES OF IGNORANCE

Decisions about where to locate a waste facility involve complex interactions among government, legal actors, and commercial actors, which are informed by historically constituted racist policies that ultimately sustain white privilege by protecting the social well-being and health of white people and the economic elite (Bullard 1993). In a study that the ENRICH Project conducted about environmental health in African Nova Scotian communities, an African Nova Scotian participant residing in Lucasville illustrates how white privilege confers a sense of entitlement to white industry owners, who come into her community and engage in activities without any consideration for how it affects the community:

Well, I find, myself personally, that things are done in a Black community without the knowledge of the people of the community a lot more than if you were in a white community because they could care less about what we feel, you know, about what's being done in this

community. You know, like you can't go into a white community and do whatever you want. If a Black man went into a white community, he'd be arrested and locked up. A white man comes in our community, he does what he wants, and he's backed up to do whatever he cares to do in our community with the knowledge of the people of Halifax Regional Municipality. You know, they grant him the permits he needs to do what he wants to do. And, even if he doesn't get the permits, he still does whatever he wants, and nothing's said to him. If a Black man builds a house or puts a garage up without the permits, they want him to tear it down ... Memento Farm [a horse farm that was built in the community] comes in here, built the house, and that's all they had a permit for. Then they put up barns and stuff without permits, and did what they want. And, nothing happens to them. (Waldron 2016)

The situation in Lucasville demonstrates how deeply embedded white privilege is. Even in spaces where racialized communities disproportionately reside, the taken-for-granted nature of whiteness confers to white people a sense of entitlement and ownership that is often not questioned by policymakers.

Mills (2007: 48) observes that "an epistemology of ignorance" characterizes the many ways in which white blindness is actively reproduced to inform knowledge, practices, and policies that uphold white privilege. For Mills (15), white people's main cognitive handicap is their ignorance of the ways in which white people as a group are recipients and beneficiaries of an epistemological legacy and logic that drives and informs racist acts. It is important at this juncture to distinguish between innocent forms of ignorance and structural forms of ignorance in articulating epistemologies of ignorance that convey whiteness as a form of capital. Whereas innocent forms of ignorance characterize white people's lack of knowledge about the privileges they benefit from based on skin colour, structural ignorance refers to white people's lack of understanding about how these privileges are embedded within laws, policies, and institutions in ways that confer to them social, economic, and political advantages. As Richard Dyer points out, "White power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (1988: 44). For white supremacy to be maintained, there must be a deep investment by whites in a universal narrative that denies the humanity of the enslaved and colonized, and that characterizes these individuals as not fully human, as Paulo Freire points out in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000: 56):

Whereas the violence of the oppressors prevents the oppressed

from being fully human, the response of the latter to this violence is grounded in the desire to pursue the right to be human.

Lipsitz (1998: 2) argues that a contributory factor to racialized hierarchies in society is a "possessive investment in whiteness" created by both public policy and private prejudice. The cash value inherent to whiteness confers advantages to whites, who are more likely to profit from housing acquired in discriminatory markets, receive quality education, access employment opportunities through insider networks, and inherit wealth through intergenerational transfers conferred to successive generations. In asserting that the accumulation of resources, power, and opportunity rely on an investment in whiteness by white people, Lipsitz (1998) encourages us to rethink our understanding of white supremacy. Rather than an ideology that merely signifies contempt for racial others, white supremacy is a system that aims to preserve the privileges of whites by restricting access to opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility by Indigenous and racialized communities. This universal narrative of whiteness as being most worthy conveys whiteness as valuable and white people as most deserving of benefits and rewards, resulting in policy decisions that benefit whites, often at the expense of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities (Lipsitz 1998).

Andrea Smith (2005) observes, however, that it is important to complicate the concept of settler colonialism beyond notions of whiteness and white privilege, since it is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is shaped by and shaping interactive relations of capitalism, coloniality, racism, gender, class, sexuality, and ableism. She argues that hierarchies impacting Indigenous peoples and settlers are naturalized by sexual, gendered and racial power, often influencing how place, culture, and power relations are understood, and disrupting intersecting power relations culminating from colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy (Smith 2005). The historical manifestation of race coincided with capitalism. A spatial imaginary that splits the world into white/Black is inherently patriarchal in origin, as is bifurcation along class and gender lines, which are, themselves, redefined and filtered through class exploitation and racism. Since heteropatriarchy and the gendered and racial division of labour operate through relations between settlers and the colonized, it is not possible to understand the colour line as separate from gender.

Drawing on these and other analyses, this book situates environmental racism within broader discussions on state-sanctioned racial and gendered violence to unmask the multiple forms of inequality disproportionately compromising the social, economic, and political well-being of Indigenous

and Black communities in Nova Scotia and Canada. In so doing, the book aims to contribute a different conceptualization of environmental racism and environmental justice in Nova Scotia and Canada by highlighting the relationships among environmental racism, other forms of state-sanctioned racial and gendered violence, settler colonialism, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, patriarchy, and health.

I recognize, however, that the reason these kinds of critical discussions have yet to be had in Canada is because there is still a dearth of studies on environmental justice in Canada, and because environmental racism has yet to be fully problematized in the environmental justice literature in this country. Moreover, both environmental racism and environmental justice have been largely divorced from the literature on contemporary urban geography and the social science literature on race (particularly in sociology). In the next chapter, I attempt to converge insights from contemporary urban geography and sociology to provide a critical analysis of environmental racism as a spatial project, as well as to call attention to the ways in which spatial violence and other forms of state-sanctioned racial and gendered violence are embodied in both the symbolic meaning of space and the materiality of space.

Chapter 3

RETHINKING WASTE

Mapping Racial Geographies of Violence on the Colonial Landscape

The racial demography of the places where people live, work, play, shop, and travel exposes them to a socially shared system of exclusion and inclusion. Race serves as a key variable in determining who has the ability to own homes that appreciate in value and can be passed down to subsequent generations; in deciding which children have access to education by experienced and credentialed teachers in safe buildings with adequate equipment; and in shaping differential exposure to polluted air, water, food, and land. (Lipsitz 2007: 12)

Lipsitz's (2007) assertion that the racial imaginary is racially marked characterizes well how racially marked spatial imaginaries are imbued in hierarchical social relations. A "white spatial imaginary," he argues, is one that is premised on white privilege because it confers to white people advantages in the form of valued opportunities, life chances, and goods and resources. As McKittrick (2002) observes, the perception of Canada as rational, white, and homogenous needs to be interrogated since nationhood, citizenship, and belonging are not experienced by Black Canadians in the same way that it is experienced by white Canadians. Differences such as race and gender are spatially organized in ways that create hierarchies and relations of domination and subordination among various groups within the home, the workplace, and the city (McKittrick and Peake 2005). This results in spatial forms of state-sanctioned racial and gendered violence within spaces (i.e., spatial violence), such as labour market inequalities, poverty, and over-policing, among others.

The racialization of space manifests in a number of ways: in the expropriation of Indigenous lands through legal means; in the formation of neighbourhoods segregated by income, class, and race; in so-called neighbourhood revitalization projects that gentrify low-income and often racialized areas by bringing